VOL 29, NO 6 DECEMBER 1978

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

THOMAS MERTON: A CHRISTIAN LOOKS AT ZEN

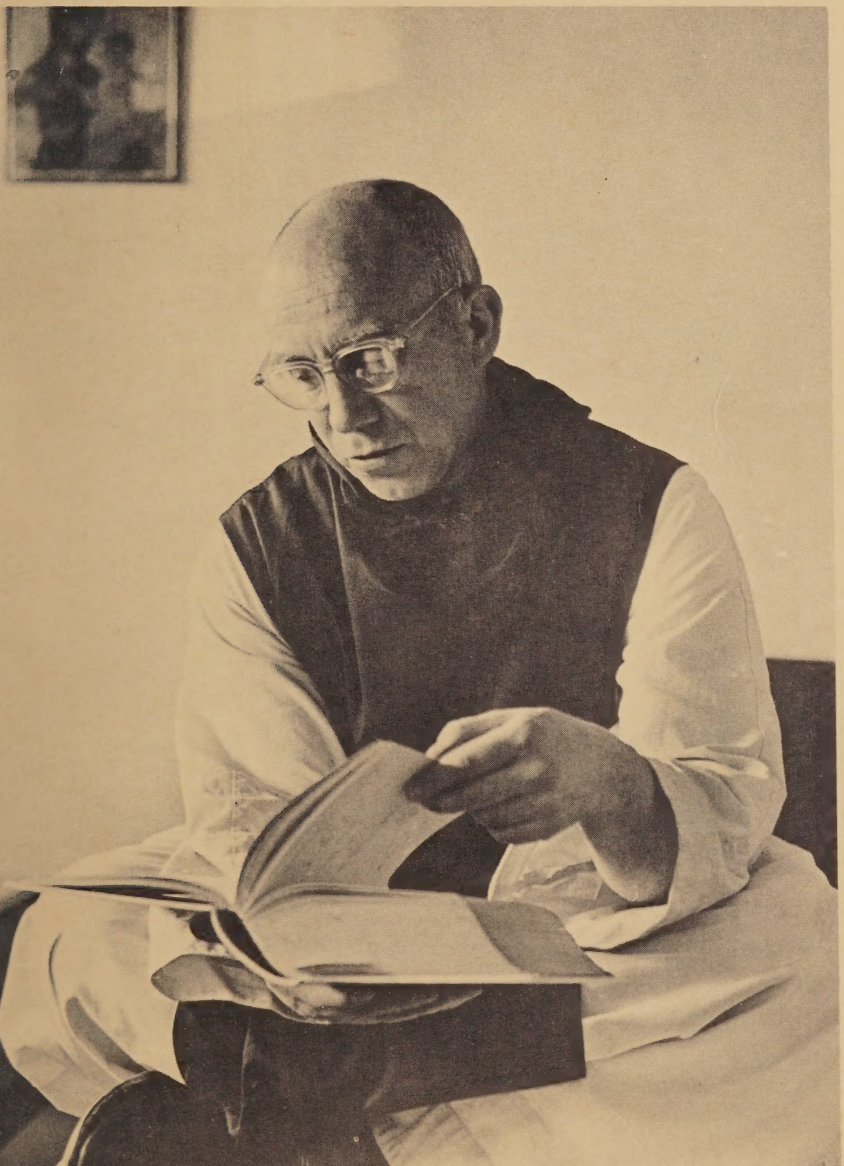


Photo by Ed Rice

THE PURPOSE of Fellowship in Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

Contents *Volume 29 / Number 6 / December 1978*

2 A Christian Looks At Zen *by Thomas Merton*

10 "This Lover Is Faithful" *by Dorothy H. Donnelly*

15 Camp David Update

16 Welthy's House of Prayer *by Margaret Ruth Thomas*

20 Monks' Marvelous Molasses Drink *by Joy Bergman*

22 Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger *by Ronald J. Sider*

COPYRIGHT 1978 BY FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC.

EDITORIAL

PRACTICING GOD'S LOVE IN THE MIDST OF A BUSY LIFE

BY PETER V.K. FUNK

BEGIN the day with the advice Jesus gave his disciples: "Whenever you go into a house, first say, *Peace be with this house.*" That should be your first prayer. This blessing helps to smooth the sharp edges of hurry and pressure for you and for everyone around you.

The day is God's gift to you. Rejoice in it!

It is helpful to make the kind of commitment that will bring you into a conscious awareness of God's presence in your life. "Into your hands, O Lord, I commit my life this day." Or you might make some other appropriate statement.

While shaving, dressing, combing your hair, etc., you could say the Lord's Prayer silently but not, however, in a perfunctory way. Say it carefully; perhaps so carefully you stop over a portion, thinking about the words. You do not necessarily have to finish the prayer. Or at this time you might rather simply "talk" to God about your plans and concerns.

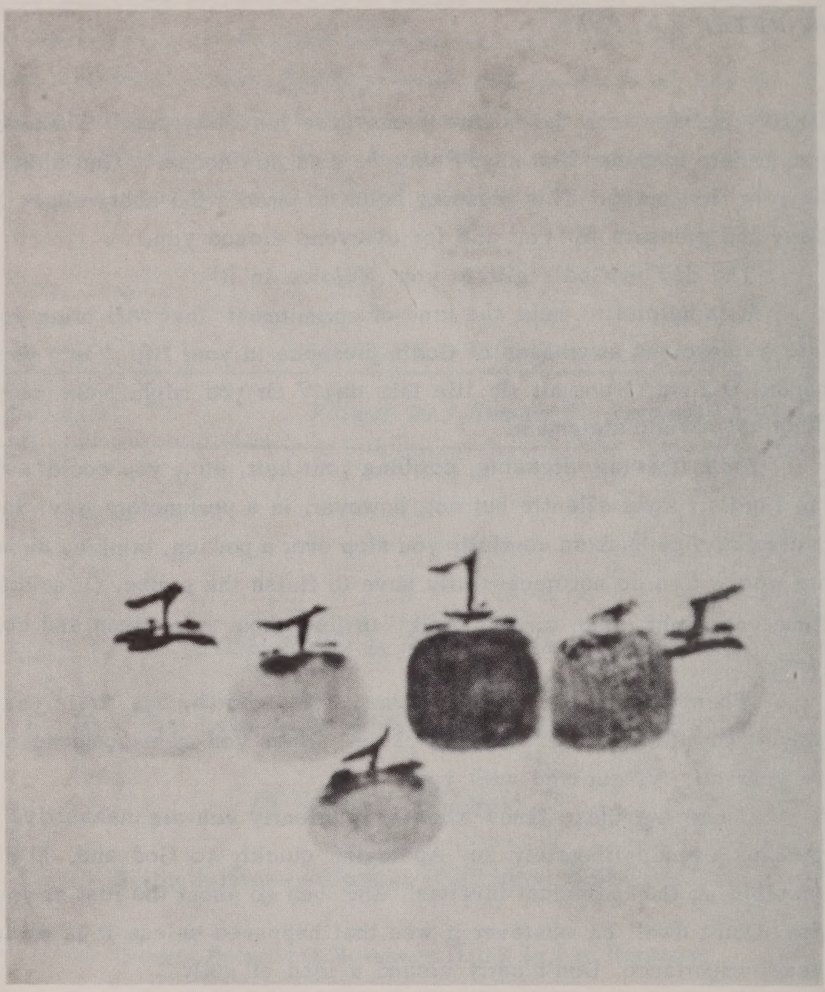
Wherever you go -- office, home, store, church, bus, train, subway -- say: "Peace be with this place." When you meet someone, say to yourself: "Peace be with you."

There are those times when inadvertently you are insensitive or perhaps even deliberately so. Apologize quickly to God and, if it's feasible, to the individual involved. And then go about the rest of your day. Don't dwell on whatever it was that happened unless it is of unusual importance. Don't carry around a load of guilt.

There are seconds and minutes scattered throughout the day when you can "talk" to God or pray for others or thank Him. When you are in a difficult or irritating situation, ask His help.

In the evening before going to bed, try to take two or three minutes to read the Bible for the day. More and more you will learn what the Lord is trying to teach us. If you are married and your spouse is amenable to the idea, do this with him or her. If you like, pray together for

(Continued on page 36)



PERSIMMONS

A Zen painting from 13th Century Japan

The similarity between the beautiful painting above, done seven centuries ago, and paintings by modern masters like Matisse has been observed by critics. Its free, direct style---seeming to be a more vivid report on nature than realism ever could be---reflects Zen teachings.

A CHRISTIAN LOOKS AT ZEN

Excerpts from "Zen and the Birds of Appetite"

BY THOMAS MERTON

. . . . THE READER WITH a Judeo-Christian background of some sort (and who in the West does not still have some such background?) will naturally be predisposed to misinterpret Zen because he will instinctively take up the position of one who is confronting a "rival system of thought" or a "competing ideology" or an "alien world view" or more simply "a false religion." Anyone who adopts such a position makes it impossible for himself to see what Zen is, because he assumes in advance that it must be something that it expressly refuses to be. Zen is not a systematic explanation of life, it is not an ideology, it is not a world view, it is not a theology of revelation and salvation, it is not a mystique, it is not a way of ascetic perfection, it is not mysticism

From ZEN AND THE BIRDS OF APPETITE by Thomas Merton, Copyright 1968 by The Abbey of Gethsemani, Inc. Reprinted by permission of NEW DIRECTIONS.

as this is understood in the West, in fact it fits no convenient category of ours. . . .

. . . . We cannot really understand Chinese Zen if we do not grasp the implicit Buddhist metaphysic which it so to speak acts out. But the Buddhist metaphysic itself is hardly doctrinal in our elaborate philosophical and theological sense: Buddhist philosophy is an interpretation of ordinary human experience, but an interpretation which is not revealed by God nor discovered in the access of inspiration nor seen in a mystical light. Basically, Buddhist metaphysics is a very simple and natural elaboration of the implications of Buddha's own experience of enlightenment. Buddhism does not seek primarily to understand or to "believe in" the enlightenment of Buddha as the solution to all human problems, but seeks an existential and empirical participation in that enlightenment experience. It is conceivable that one might have the "enlightenment" without being aware of any discursive philosophical implications at all. These implications are not seen as having any theological bearing whatever, and they point only to the ordinary natural condition of man. It is true that they arrive at certain fundamental deductions which were in the course of time elaborated into complex religious and philosophical systems. But the chief characteristic of Zen is that it rejects all these systematic elaborations in order to get back, as far as possible, to the pure unarticulated and unexplained ground of direct experience. The direct experience of what? Life itself. What it means that I exist, that I live: who is this "I" that exists and lives? What is the difference between an authentic and an illusory awareness of the self that exists and lives? What are and are not the basic facts of existence?

When we in the West speak of "basic facts of existence" we tend to conceive these facts as reducible to certain austere and foolproof propositions--logical statements that are guaranteed to have meaning because they are empirically verifiable. These are what Bertrand Russell called "atomic facts." Now for Zen it is inconceivable that the basic facts of existence should be able to be stated in any proposition however atomic. For Zen, from the moment fact is transferred to a statement it is falsified. One ceases to grasp the naked reality of experience and one grasps a form of words instead. . . . The whole aim of Zen is not to make foolproof statements about experience, but to come to direct grips with reality without the mediation of logical verbalizing.

. . . . The Zen experience is a direct grasp of the *unity* of the

invisible and the visible, the noumenal and the phenomenal, or, if you prefer, an experiential realization that any such division is bound to be pure imagination.

. . . . NOW THE GREAT OBSTACLE to mutual understanding between Christianity and Buddhism lies in the Western tendency to focus not on the Buddhist *experience*, which is essential, but on the *explanation*, which is accidental, and which indeed Zen often regards as completely trivial and even misleading.

Buddhist meditation, but above all that of Zen, seeks not to *explain* but to *pay attention*, to *become aware*, to *be mindful*, in other words to develop a certain kind of consciousness that is above and beyond deception by verbal formulas--or by emotional excitement. . . .

Zen, then, aims at a kind of certainty: but it is not the logical certainty of philosophical proof, still less the religious certainty that comes with the acceptance of the word of God by the obedience of faith. It is rather the certainty that goes with an authentic metaphysical intuition which is also existential and empirical. The purpose of all Buddhism is to refine the consciousness until this kind of insight is attained and the religious implications of the insight are then variously worked out and applied to life in the different Buddhist traditions.

. . . . WHEN WE SET Christianity and Buddhism side by side, we must try to find the points where a genuinely common ground between the two exists. At the present moment, this is no easy task. In fact it is still practically impossible to really find any such common ground except in a very schematic and artifical way. After all, what do we mean by Christianity, and what do we mean by Buddhism? Is Christianity Christian theology? Ethics? Mysticism? Worship? Is our idea of Christianity to be taken without further qualification as the Roman Catholic Church? Or does it include Protestant Christianity? The Protestantism of Luther or that of Bonhoeffer? The Protestantism of the God-is-dead school? The Catholicism of St Thomas? Of St Augustine and the Western church fathers? A supposedly "pure" Christianity of the Gospels? A demythologized Christianity? A ' 'social Gospel"? And what do we mean by Buddhism? The Theravada Buddhism of Ceylon, or that of Burma? Tibetan Buddhism? Tantric Buddhism? Pure Land Buddhism? Speculative and

scholastic Indian Buddhism of the middle ages? Or Zen?

The immense variety of forms taken by thought, experience, worship, moral practice, in both Buddhism and Christianity, make all comparisons haphazard. . . .

But can one distill from religious or mystical experience certain pure elements which are common everywhere in all religions? Or is the basic understanding of the nature and meaning of experience so determined by the variety of doctrines that a comparison of experiences involves us inevitably in a comparison of metaphysical or religious beliefs? This is no easy question either. If a Christian mystic has an experience which can be phenomenonologically compared with a Zen experience, does it matter that the Christian in fact believes he is personally united with God and the Zen-man interprets his experience as *Sunyata* or the Void being aware of itself? In what sense can these two experiences be called "mystical"? Suppose that the Zen Masters forcefully repudiate any attempt on the part of Christians to grace them with the titles of "mystics"?

. . . . It is never easy to say with any security that what a Christian mystic and a Sufi and a Zen Master experience is really "the same thing." What does such a claim mean? Can it be made at all without inplying (quite falsely) that these higher experiences are "experiences of something"? It therefore remains a very serious problem to distinguish in all these higher forms of religious and metaphysical consciousness what is "pure experience" and what is to some extent determined by language, symbol, or indeed by the "grace of a sacrament." We have hardly reached the point where we know enough about these different states of consciousness and about their metaphysical implications to compare them in accurate detail. But there are nevertheless certain analogies and correspondence which are evident even now, and which may perhaps point out the way to a better mutual understanding. Let us not rashly take them as "proofs" but only as significant clues.

Is it therefore possible to say that both Christians and Buddhists can equally well practice Zen? Yes, if by Zen we mean precisely the quest for direct and pure experience on a metaphysical level, liberated from verbal formulas and linguistic preconceptions. . . . .

TAKUAN THE ZEN MASTER

. . . . CHRISTIANITY is a religion of grace and divine gift, hence of total dependence on God. Zen is not easily classified as "a religion" (it is in fact easily separable from any religious matrix and can supposedly flourish in the soil either of non-Buddhist religions or no religion at all), and in any event it strives, like all Buddhism, to make man free and independent even in his striving for salvation and enlightenment. Independent of what? Of merely external supports and authorities which keep him from having access to and making use of the deep resources in his own nature and psyche. . . .

. . . . TO EXPERIENCE the mystery of Christ mystically or otherwise is always to transcend the merely individual psychological level and to "experience theologically with the Church". . . . In other words, this experience must always be in some way reducible to a theological form that can be shared by the rest of the Church or that shows that it is a sharing of what the rest of the Church experiences. There is therefore in the recording of Christian experiences a natural tendency to set them down in language and symbols that are easily accessible to other Christians. This may perhaps sometimes mean an unconscious translation of the inexpressible into familiar symbols that are always at hand ready for immediate use.

Zen on the other hand resolutely resists any temptation to be easily communicable, and a great deal of the paradox and violence of Zen teaching and practice is aimed at blasting the foundation of ready explanation and comforting symbol out from under the disciple's supposed "experience." The Christian experience is acceptable in so far as it accords with an established theological and symbolic pattern. The Zen experience is only acceptable on the basis of its absolute singularity. . . .

. . . . NOW IN ZEN, what is communicated is not a message. It is not simply a "word," even though it might be "the word of the Lord." It is not a "what." It does not bring "news," which the receiver did not already have, about something the one informed did not yet know. What Zen communicates is an awareness that is potentially already there but is not conscious of itself. Zen is then not Kerygma but realization, not revelation but consciousness, not news from the Father who sends His Son into this world, but awareness of the ontological ground of our own

being here and now, right in the midst of the world. . . .

If this is true, then we must admit it is perfectly logical to admit, with the Zen Masters, that "Zen teaches nothing."

. . . . THE HUMAN DILEMMA of communication is that we cannot commuicate ordinarily without words and signs, but even ordinary experience tends to be falsified by our habits of verbalization and rationalization. The convenient tools of language enable us to decide beforehand what we think things mean, and tempt us all too easily to see things only in a way that fits our logical preconceptions and our verbal formulas. Instead of seeing *things* and *facts* as they are we see them as reflections and verifications of the sentences we have previously made up in our minds. We quickly forget how to simply *see* things and substitute our words and our formulas for the things themselves, manipulating facts so that we see only what conveniently fits our prejudices. Zen uses language against itself to blast out these preconceptions and to destroy the specious "reality" in our minds so that we can see directly. Zen is saying, as Wittgenstein said, "Don't think: Look!"

. . . . THE ZEN "FACT," whatever it may be, always lands across our path like a fallen tree beyond which we cannot pass.

. . . . THOUGH FEW WESTERNERS will ever actually come to a real understanding of Zen, it is still worth their while to be exposed to its brisk and heady atmosphere."

Thomas Merton (1915-1968) was one of this century's most interesting writers. Born in France, raised there and in England and the U.S., he received his B.A. from Columbia University in 1938, when he published the best-selling Seven Storey Mountain. *Following his conversion to Catholicism, he entered the Cistercian Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky, where he was ordained as Father M. Louis and served as master of scholastics and master of novices. His reputation as a poet was superseded in his final years by his studies of Zen and other oriental philosophies, during which period he posed in Trappist robes (cover). He died while at an interfaith conference in Southeast Asia.*

Carl G. Karsch

THIS LOVER IS FAITHFUL

"Scripture is now my springboard for prayer.
I needed to decide to take time for God's Spirit to give me
the serenity and vision needed for meaning to touch my life. . . ."

BY DOROTHY H. DONNELLY

"BE CAREFUL, you'll spill it and burn the house down!" My sister Rose straightened out the Sacred Heart oil-lamp in my numb fingers before its wick flame ignited the book and the bed we were sharing in a forbidden after-lights-out reading binge in our big old house in San Francisco. We vainly hoped my mother wouldn't see light from a vigil lamp under the door! The book had nothing to do with prayer--yet --but the lamp says much to me about the enclosing warmth of the deep faith of my Dad and Mom. Faith and prayer were our atmosphere, never separated from our woes, worries, joys, all expressed with appropriate Gaelic sentiment upon each occasion--the prayer of "exclamation" was never foreign to us. My father used the direct method. I can still hear his tread in the hall and his knock on our bedroom door every First Friday morning: "OK, girls, it's six o'clock!" And off we went to the 6:30 at Salesian Corpus Christi in the outer Mission--and nobody minded, because he went too.

Confession each month before First Friday went like clockwork, everybody trooping, class after class, to church with no thought of our "regimentation." In fact we enjoyed the break from classes. I especially loved it because of my confessor, a beautiful old Salesian whose broken Italian-English and talented musical background translated my name into "Hello, Doro-tee Do-re-mi," as he slid back the screen and we chatted on and on as I told him my monthly horrenda--always to a kindly ear.

Those Catholic school years introduced me to St Joseph (our sisters were from Orange, California) and to St John Bosco, so much livelier than St Joseph somehow, battling in the streets of Turin for his ragged boys. Besides, he did magic tricks--a new idea for a saint, one greatly augmented by my later introduction to Thomas More in eighth grade. He had brains, besides, and told jokes, even climbing scaffolds! I fell promptly in love and never got over it, devouring biographies with a passionthat resulted one day in a doctoral thesis.

But the lady who added the "prayer" dimension to faith and courage was that spunky little consumptive, Marie-Therese Martin, dashing off to Rome to get the Pope to open Carmel. Last summer as our train sped past the sunny walls of her basilica in Lisieux, I could only marvel how deeply and how long that demure steely-soft sister of mine had challenged me to try to grow. Her ''Story of a Soul'' was my bible, and I imbibed her ways to pray, to see God, even how she thought about sickness and death.

By the end of high school, however, she had to retire to Carmel for sure, as I decided to experience the world: work, friends, social life, dating, and even study. A year later, to my real surprise (but not that of Tess, Joe, or Tom More), I did enter Orange after telling the sisters no. On the way downstairs from that negative, I was caught by the far-flung panorama of San Francisco-out-the-window--and the sight of a blossoming cherry in one of its secret hanging gardens--and suddenly I knew that I had to "try it" if even for two weeks. I suppose they are still recovering from that quick reversal. The two weeks have been quite long.

Little Tess and Tom More had taught me that Christian life was heroic, exciting, and hard too, so convent meditation (sweating out the Southern California summer, hands deep in big black sleeves) was a way

to get through to God by "thinking straight ahead." Fortunately my emotional side woke too, and I found prayer, saints, perfection bathed in a warm glow. I was a novice who never quite understood what everybody was doing, but enjoyed most of it still. Though Scripture was not part of our training, I somehow got to final vows deeply in love with the Psalms, those heart-openers that saved me from the "points" of meditation. Luckily, my novice mistress was a holy lady so the methodology didn't matter.

Once out, I taught and taught and taught, loving every minute of it, finding daily meditation a place to stop, breathe, often sleep but at least be quiet, and "spiritual reading" each day was the source of whatever spiritual growth took place. Study too (on the side!) was always pressing, so three degrees, and some years later, death suddenly challenged my values and called for a reassessment. I lost my father and sister within two years, took off for a sabbatical to see if theology had any explanation, for my head needed to understand too. Instead, I discovered Protestant theology, ecumenical joy, and when I began to teach it myself, a great expansion of my horizons that demanded rethinking. Meanwhile, the stress of change and another degree led me back to Scripture for my prayer. The Spirit truly woke up my heart, and with Fr Don Gelpi's theology courses, many pieces came together to combine the intellect and emotional phases of growth. My own teaching, especially co-teaching with him, and the writing that seemed to grow from it naturally--all of it poured power into my prayer which became communion with a dear friend who didn't worry about sin, lapses, errors, foolishness, but who demanded total surrender.

FROM my patristic studies. Gregory of Nyssa had shown me a great reverence for Scripture. Before opening that book, I learned to ask its true author, the Spirit, to teach me what he wanted me to learn that day. The Scripture is now my springboard for prayer. I needed to decide to take time strictly each day for God's Spirit to give me the serenity and vision needed for meaning to touch my life.

So, after *deciding* to take time to pray, then *taking time* comes next, keeping that appointment with Truth each day to listen, to be attentive and to wait and wait and wait, for we don't pray to have God hear us, but that we will hear God. But then, to stop when God touches

my heart and to go with God in joy, love, tears, aspirations, little cries of the heart in praise, thanks, adoring this One who has come so tenderly, molding us from within.

Out of this going with God come peace, joy, and trust that make life exciting, light-some. I no longer need to use good energy wondering about my perfection, a useless trip. No, rather there is a breathless daily agenda God gives us in prayer. Sins, mistakes, faults, yes, are a real cause for regret and we work to get rid of them, but how differently! No panic, shock, refusal to try again because the great "I" could sin or be wrong! Of course! Now everything is "of course" when we let the Spirit in.

The wonder was: What was I beating my head in about when all the time the content of prayer comes from God? I don't supply it, only the time, only myself present and aware, listening, only myself letting go . . . . . If I can't let go, I ask God for letting-go as a gift He wants me to have in Jesus' name: the gift of let-go-ness. Sometimes, even, I let go of "praying" when it can become an idol or something I tend to own, and I just go where God calls in our time together, as God pleases, to go with the river--and stop scrubbing the raft.

No, I just don't know who this God is in my prayer, but I know a bit more than I did. Never will I catch God in my butterfly-net or that's not my God! But gradually this "great sneak" of a God moved into my space, always intitiating love, pain, questions, enticing me into the growth pattern God desires. He is also the "great pedagogue" of Clement of Alexandria, the ultimate teacher whom I now want to teach me, to hear, even to follow, no matter how much I fear change simply because I know now that this is the God who spends his non-time giving himself away, a God who will accept only one compliment--trust--and who pulls a corresponding trust from me. This God is a giver of gifts: the Son, the Spirit, and my very self and all the selves about me. I know that God wants in return my trust and love because trusting him means, I believe, that this lover is faithful, and that is his name.

From NEW CATHOLIC WORLD, Jan / Feb, 1977, New York, N.Y.

Camp David Update

SOMETIMES serendipity* presents you with an ideal opportunity. For Fellowship in Prayer it was the Camp David meetings in September.

Each of the three leaders represented one of the major world religions. Each is steeped in the traditions of his faith. As you recall, along with public support of the meetings, we inserted some thoughts on prayer which we believed would be helpful to readers.

The Fellowship's effort received a warm response. We thought you would like to see a sampling of the letters.

"Thanks for your appreciation of the benefits of prayer."

"I want to tell you how joyous it was to see someone really believing in the strength of prayer."

"I personally had a very positive reaction to your message and wish your organization every success."

"We know that God can bring peace. . . We join with you in your prayers for the Middle East, as well as those other areas of our world in turmoil."

"Your message in today's paper was very appropriate, and I am pleased to make this modest contribution."

"I wish you much success in your endeavor to remind us that prayers should be part of our daily life."

"The concept of the newspaper ads soliciting prayer for the meetings was brilliant. . . . One of the evangelistic 'fall-outs' of asking the unchurched to pray is that their faith *will* deepen."

"You might be interested to know that, in a recent briefing, National Security Adviser, Dr Zbgniew Brzezinki said he felt the one key bond holding the three leaders together--and assuring success at Camp David--was their close and strong spiritual unity. All three are deeply religious men who believe in the power of prayer."

May the Fellowship have other opportunities to unite many people in prayer!

---

*Serendipity: "*An apparent aptitude for making fortunate discoveries accidentally*"—*Webster's New World Dictionary.*

Nearing her hundredth birthday, Welthy Fisher, founder of India's Literacy House, believes more than ever that "all men are brothers within the four seas"

Welthy's House of PRAYER

BY MARGARET RUTH THOMAS

THERE IS a House Of Prayer For All Peoples at Literacy House in Lucknow, India. It's more than a house. It is a village. Simple buildings--dormitories, classrooms, and library--cluster around it. Actually, it's a campus, a seat of learning for all Indians, primarily villagers, who come to it proudly and eagerly, conscious of their responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

There are many projects for the people of India and for their Asian neighbors, but the greatest emphasis is on literacy. In India--a country seventy-seven per cent illiterate--this is a priority program.

Village women whose education has been interrupted may come to Literacy House to do four years of academic work in two. Specialists in arts and crafts and home-science go out to the villages to conduct classes for women.

Journalists and writers study techniques of writing for new liter-

Welthy Fisher stands---some time ago---on the grounds of Literacy House in India. She designed the center to include a house of prayer for all people "under a thatched roof, curving up like a pagoda roof and culminating in a finger of God," a gate "wide enough to welcome the world."

ates and go to the villages to test them. Elected leaders attend classes, join in discussion groups, and educate themselves for their responsibilities.

Where was the idea for such a project born?

In the mind of an American-born woman of seventy-two who kept a promise made to Mahatma Gandhi just before his death to "go out into the villages and teach the people." Welthy Honsinger Fisher, originally from Rome, N.Y., had written of her belief in education as a way of broadening and bettering life on earth. "All men are brothers within the four seas," she believed. And she made her beliefs a reality when she started a people-to-people program in India which took form as Literacy House. Following the plan of the "three f's"--functional literacy, food production, and family planning--Literacy House has become not only a center for the training of teachers and the production of

books for new readers, but also a model for such centers in many lands.

Welthy Fisher is known in India as "the literacy lady." Of her work she says, "I've learned more than I've taught and gained more than I've given."

1978 is the Welthy Fisher centennial year. It was launched, on September eighteenth, her ninety-ninth birthday, at a reception in her honor in New York City. Nobody enjoyed the party more than Welthy, who made her usual delightful comments and, seated on a platform, greeted each of the many guests. Everyone who was there plans to attend her hundredth birthday party.

WELTHY PLANNED a career in grand opera after her graduation from Syracuse University. But, after attending an inspiring missionary meeting, she changed her plans and sailed for China in 1906. In Nanchang, she became headmistress of Bao Lin Girls' School. Her strength and determination made her a model for young Chinese women struggling to break free of ancient traditions and assert their intelligence and independence.

In 1918, she turned the school over to her Chinese assistant and traveled to Europe as a member of the YWCA's War Work Council. When the war ended, she did more traveling, wrote, edited a church magazine, and lectured on her experiences.

In 1924, she married Frederick B.Fisher, Methodist bishop of Calcutta and Burma. When she married him, she says, "I married India." He was a friend of the poet Rabindranath Tagore and a friend and supporter of Gandhi, Nehru, and other leaders of the independence movement. Later, Bishop Fisher turned his post over to Indians and accepted a pastorate in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

After she was widowed in 1938, Welthy resumed her lecturing and traveling. She visited Africa, Europe, Latin America, and the rest of Asia. She says she was looking for a cause that would satisfy her energy, her love of service, and desire for achievement. In 1947, she went again to India. Gandhi made his request to her to help the villagers--and Literacy House was under way.

For ten years, through AID, the U.S. governemnt helped substantially in its development, which now included an institute for young farmers and a family-life center. Welthy not only intiated each phase of the program but established an all-Indian board to govern it.

PLANNED so that it would "enclose our peace," Literacy House receives many visitors. This suits Welthy. "How exciting it is to be alive!" she wrote from Lucknow on her eightieth birthday.

Having turned Literacy House over to the people to whom it belonged, she did not give up traveling. In 1971, she flew to California, and, in 1978, to Peking, where she saw old friends such as Madame Sun Yat-sen and others she has known in some instances for seventy years. Many of her friends---Chester Bowles, Norman Cousins, Norman Vincent Peale, Dorothy McGuire, among them---make up the committee of World Education (of which Welthy is honorary chairman) which aims to raise one million dollars for her hundredth birthday party. This is World Education's effort to honor Welthy by carrying on and expanding her work.

After all but a century of service, Welthy says, "You don't grow old. You just get old because you stop growing."

This was one of her recent Christmas messages: "Dear friends of mine in today's world. A blessed Christmas to you. 'Listen,' Christmas bells are saying. The high notes ring of love and joy, the low ones of hunger and despair. But you and I---children of all nations--- when joined together can change the tunes. God bless us all together. One God. One Life. One Joy! Amen."

Welthy welcomes author Thomas to her ninety-ninth birthday party.

RECOMMENDED as delicious, especially during the holiday season, is Monks' Marvelous Molasses Drink, the recipe for which is printed on the page opposite. Along with recipes for Cloister Carrots, Benedictine Orange Rice, Beans Bengal, Brother Victor's Lentil Souffle, Poor Persons' Sukiyaki, and many more, it comes from a fascinating and beautifully illustrated vegetarian cookbook called *From A Monastery Kitchen,* published by Harper and Row, New York.

The recipes have been collected from contemplative monasteries all over the U.S. as well as France and Italy. They were compiled by Elise Boulding with the assistance of Brother Victor Avila and Sister Jean-Marie Pearse.

With the help of his novice Brother Patrick, Brother Victor runs a Benedictine monastery in La Grangeville, N.Y., which is the smallest in the nation. There is no fee set for staying there---where Brother Victor, in addition to doing the cooking, chants the divine office each day to music he has composed himself. You donate what you can. . . .

--JOY BERGMAN

"Let every Guest be received as if he were Christ."
--Benedictine Motto

Monks' Marvelous Molasses Drink

8 TABLESPOONS POWDERED MILK
6 TABLESPOONS UNSULFURED MOLASSES
2 CUPS OF WATER

Mix the powdered milk with one cup of water in a small pot. Bring to boil, continuing to stir. When boiling, add molasses and one cup of water. Stir and mix very well. Serve warm in winter, especially at night. Chill and serve cold in summer. Makes two glasses or two cups.

From the book FROM A MONASTERY KITCHEN, Copyright 1976 by Elise Boulding
Illustrations selected and arranged by Daniel Marshall, Copyright 1976
Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord (Proverbs 19:17)

I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the afflicted, and executes justice for the needy (Psalm 140:12)

RICH CHRISTIANS IN AN AGE OF HUNGER

BY RONALD J. SIDER

WHAT IS the Biblical approach to possessions and poverty? The Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches a fundamental point that we have often overlooked. At the crucial moments when God displayed his mighty

acts in history to reveal his nature and will, God *also* intervened to liberate the poor and oppressed.

The Exodus

God displayed his power at the Exodus in order to free oppressed slaves! When he called Moses at the burning bush, God's intention was to end suffering and injustice: "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians" (Ex. 3:7- 8).

Now of course the liberation of oppressed slaves was not God's only purpose in the Exodus. God also acted because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He wanted to create a special people to whom he could reveal himself. The liberation of a poor, oppressed people, however, was right at the heart of God's design.

The God of the Bible wants to be known as the liberator of the oppressed. . . .

Destruction and Captivity

When God called Israel out of Egypt and made his covenant with them, he gave them his law so that they could live together in peace and justice. But Israel failed to obey the law of the covenant. As a result, God destroyed Israel and sent his chosen people into captivity.

Why?

The explosive message of the prophets is that God destroyed Israel because of mistreatment of the poor! The Word of the Lord is this: Economic exploitation sent the chosen people into captivity.

The middle of the eighth century B.C. was a time of political success and economic prosperity unknown since the days of Solomon. But it was precisely at this moment that God sent his prophet Amos to announce the unwelcome news that the northern kingdom of Israel would be destroyed. Penetrating beneath the facade of current prosperity and fantastic economic growth, Amos saw terrible oppression of the poor. He saw the rich "trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth." He saw that the affluent lifestyle of the rich was built on oppression of the poor. He denounced the rich women ("cows" was Amos's word) "who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to their husbands, 'Bring, that we may drink." Even in the courts the poor had no hope because the

rich bribed the judges.

Archaeologists have confirmed Amos's picture of shocking extremes of wealth and poverty. . . .

The Incarnation

Christians believe that God revealed himself most completely in Jesus of Nazareth. How did the Incarnate One define his mission?

His words in the synagogue at Nazareth, spoken near the beginning of his public ministry, still throb with hope for the poor. He read from the prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

After reading these words, he informed the audience that this Scripture was now fulfilled in himself. The mission of the Incarnate One was to free the oppressed and heal the blind. (It was also to preach the gospel. And this is *equally* important although the focus of my subject precludes further discussion of it.) The poor are the only group specifically singled out as recipients of Jesus' gospel. Certainly the gospel he proclaimed was for all, but he was particularly concerned that the poor realize that his good news was for them.

Some try to avoid the clear meaning of Jesus's statements by spiritualizing his words. Certainly, as other texts show, he came to open our blinded hearts, to die for our sins, and to free us from the oppression of guilt. But that is not what he means here. The words about releasing captives and liberating the oppressed are from Isaiah. In their original Old Testament setting, they unquestionably referred to physical oppression and captivity.

Jesus's actual ministry corresponded precisely to the words of Luke 4. He spent most of his time not among the rich and powerful in Jerusalem, but among the poor in the cultural and economic backwater of Galilee. He healed the sick and blind. He fed the hungry. And he warned his followers in the strongest possible words that those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners will experience eternal damnation.

. . . . According to Scripture, it is just as much a part of God's essence to defend the weak, the stranger, and the oppressed as to create the universe. Because of who he is, Yahweh lifts up the mistreated. The foundation of Christian concern for the hungry and oppressed is that God cares especially for them.

God Identifies with the Poor

God not only acts in history to liberate the poor, but in a mysterious way that we can only half fathom, the sovereign of the universe identifies with the weak and destitute. Two proverbs state this beautiful truth. Proverbs 14:31 puts it negatively: "He who oppresses the poor man insults his Maker." Even more moving is the positive formulation: "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord" (19:17). What a statement! Helping a poor person is like helping the Creator of all things with a loan.

Jesus's identification with the poor and unfortunate was, he said, a sign that he was the Messiah. When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus if he were the long-expected Messiah, Jesus simply pointed to his deeds. He was healing the sick and preaching to the poor. Jesus also preached to the rich. But apparently it was his particular concern to preach to the poor that validated his claim to Messiahship. His preoccupation with the poor and disadvantaged contrasted sharply with the style of his contemporaries. . . .

Only as we feel the presence of the incarnate God in the form of a poor Galilean can we begin to understand his words: *I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. . . . I was naked and you clothed me. . . . Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.*

God's Special Instruments

God might have selected a rich, powerful nation as his chosen people. Instead he chose oppressed slaves. God picked an impoverished enslaved people to be his special instrument of revelation and salvation for all people. . . .

Of course one must not overstate the case. Abraham seems to have been well off. Moses lived at Pharoah's court for forty years. Paul and Luke were neither poor nor uneducated. God did not work exclusively through impoverished, oppressed people. There is a sharp contrast, none-

theless, between God's procedure and ours. When we want to effect change, we almost always contact people with influence, prestige, and power. When God wanted to save the world, he selected slaves, prostitutes, and sundry other disadvantaged folk. . . .

Jesus's story of the rich man and Lazarus echoes and illustrates another teaching prominent throughout Scripture: The rich may prosper for a time but eventually God will destroy them; the poor on the other hand, God will exalt.. . . .

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus does not say that the rich man exploited Lazarus. He merely shows that he had no concern for the sick beggar lying outside his gate. "Clothed in purple and fine linen," the rich man "feasted sumptuously every day." Lazarus, on the other hand, "desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table." Did the rich man deny hungry Lazarus? Perhaps not. But obviously he had no real concern for him. Such sinful neglect of the needy infuriates the God of the poor. When Lazarus died, God comforted him in Abraham's bosom. When the rich man died, torment confronted him. The meaning of the name Lazarus, ' 'one whom God has helped," underlies the basic point. God aids the poor, but the rich he sends away empty.

Clark Pinnock, of Regent College, is surely correct when he notes that "a story like that of Dives and Lazarus ought to explode in our hands when we read it sitting at our well-covered tables while the third world stands outside." Not only the law and the prophets but our Lord himself declares the terrifying word that God destroys the rich when they fail to assist the poor..

God' s Concern and Ours

Since God cares so much for the poor, it is hardly surprising that he wants his people to do the same. God's command to believers is to have a special regard for the poor, weak, and disadvantaged.

Equal justice for the poor in court is a constant theme of Scripture. The law commanded it. The Psalmist invoked divine assistance for the king so that he could provide it. And the prophets announced destruction because the rulers stubbornly subverted it.

Widows, orphans, and strangers also receive particularly frequent attention: *You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry;*

and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

"The fatherless, widows, and foreigners," John F. Alexander observes, "each have about forty verses that command justice for them. God wants to make it very clear that in a special sense he is the protector of these weak ones. Strangers are to be treated nearly the same as Jews, and woe to people who take advantage of orphans or widows."

Rare indeed are the Christians who pay any attention to Jesus's command to show "bias" toward the poor in their dinner invitations. *When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors. . . . But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. . . .*

Lest we forget the warning, God repeats it in 1 John 3:17-18. "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth." Again the words are plain. What do they mean for Western Christians who demand increasing affluence each year while Christians in the Third World suffer malnutrition, deformed bodies and brains--even starvation? The text clearly says that if we fail to aid the needy, we do not have God's love--no matter what we may say. It is deeds that count, not pious phrases and saintly speeches. Regardless of what we do or say at eleven o'clock Sunday morning, affluent people who neglect the poor are not the people of God.

But still the question persists. Are professing believers no longer Christians because of continuing sin? Obviously not. The Christian knows that sinful selfishness continues to plague even the most saintly. We are members of the people of God not because of our own righteousness but solely because of Christ's death for us.

But that response is inadequate. Matthew 25 and 1 John 3 surely mean more than that the people of God are disobedient (but still justified all the same) when they neglect the poor. These verses pointedly assert that some people so disobey God that they are not his people at all in spite of their pious profession. Neglect of the poor is one of the oft-repeated Biblical signs of such disobedience. Certainly none of us would claim that we fulfill Matthew 25 perfectly. And we cling to the hope of forgiveness. But there comes a point (and, thank God, he alone knows

where) when neglect of the poor is no longer forgiven. It is punished. Eternally.

God's concern for the poor is astonishing and boundless. At the pivotal points of revelation history. Yahweh was at work liberating the oppressed. We can only begin to fathom the depth of his identification with the poor disclosed in the Incarnation. Frequently the poor are his specially chosen instruments of revelation and salvation. His passion for justice compells him to obliterate rich societies and individuals that oppress the poor and neglect the needy. Consequently, God's people--if they are indeed his people--follow in the footsteps of the God of the poor.

Where Should We Change?

A prominent Washington think-tank recently assembled a large cross section of distinguished religious leaders to discuss the problems of world hunger. The conferees expressed deep concern. They called for significant structural change. But their words rang hollow. They were meeting at a very expensive, exclusive resort in Colorado! Simpler personal lifestyles are essential.

But personal change is insufficient. I have a friend who has forsaken the city for a rural community. He grows almost all his own food, lives very simply, and places very few demands on the poor of the earth. Unfortunately, this person has considerable speaking and writing talents which could promote change in church and society, but he is failing to use them to the full.

We need change at three levels. Simple personal lifestyles are crucial to symbolize, validate, and facilitate our concern for the hungry. The church must change so that its common life presents a new model for a divided world. Finally, the structures of secular society, both here and abroad, require revision.

The God of North America

Why are we so unconcerned, so slow to care? One reason becomes apparent from the story of the rich young ruler. When he asked Jesus how to obtain eternal life, Jesus told him to sell all his goods and give to the poor. But the man went away sad because he had great possessions. Now as we are usually told, the point of the story undoubtedly is that if we want to follow Christ, he alone must be at the center of our affections and plans. Whether the idol be riches, fame, status, academic distinc-

6 ways to start a
Thunderbird
COCKTAIL WINE

tion, or membership in any in-group, we must be willing to abandon it for Christ's sake. Riches just happened to be this young man's idol. Jesus then is not commanding us to sell all our possessions. He is only demanding total submission to himself.

We have become ensnared by unprecedented material luxury. Advertising constantly convinces us that we really need one unnecessary luxury after another. The standard-of-living is the god of the twentieth-century. . . .

Dare we care more about obtaining a secure economic future for our family than for living an uncompromisingly Christian lifestyle?

I do not pretend that giving an honest answer to such questions will be easy. Our responsibility is not always clear. One Saturday morning as I was beginning to prepare a lecture (on poverty!), a poor man came into my office and asked for five dollars. He was drinking. He had no food, no job, no home. The Christ of the poor confronted me in this man. But I didn't have the time, I said. I had a lecture to prepare on the Christian view of poverty. To be sure, I did give him a couple of dollars, but that was not what he needed. He needed someone to talk to, somebody to love him. He needed my time. He needed me. But I was too busy. "Inasmuch as you did it not to the least of these, you did it not. . . ."

We Christians need to make some dramatic concrete moves to escape the materialism that seeps into our minds via the diabolically clever and incessant radio and TV commercials. We have been brainwashed to believe that bigger houses, more prosperous businesses and more luxurious gadgets are worthy goals in life. As a result, we are caught in an absurd, materialistic spiral. The more we make, the more we think we need in order to live decently and respectably. Somehow we have to break this cycle because it makes us sin against our needy brothers and sisters and, therefore, against our Lord.

The Graduated Tithe

The graduated tithe is one of many models which can help break this materialistic stranglehold. I share it because it has proved helpful in our family. Obviously it is not the only useful model. Certainly it is not a Biblical norm to be prescribed legalistically for others. We are very aware of the fact that it is only a modest beginning.

When Arbutus and I decided to adopt a graduated scale for our giving in 1969, we started by sitting down and trying to calculate hon-

estly what we would need to live for a year. We wanted a figure that would permit reasonable comfort but not all the luxuries. I suspect we arrived at this base amount rather arbitrarily. The authors of *Limits to Growth* suggest a standard of living which everyone in the world could share without rapidly depleting our natural resources and provoking prompt ecological disaster. Perhaps their figure of $1800 per person per year might offer a more rational way to arrive at one's base amount. Another more radical approach would be to use the U.S. government's definition of the poverty level for one's basic amount. In early 1976, that would have meant a figure of $5,050 for a family of four.

Somehow we arrived at a figure of $7,000. (Two growing boys and a new daughter have recently raised it to $8,000.) We decided to continue giving a tithe of 10 per cent on this basic amount. Then for every additional thousand dollars of income above that basic amount, we decided to increase our giving by 5 per cent on that thousand. The Table shows how it works out for an income of $13,000 and a base amount of $8,000.

Income	kingdom giving percentage	kingdom giving amount
First $8,000	10%	$800
Next 1,000	15%	150
Next 1,000	20%	200
Next 1,000	25%	250
Next 1,000	30%	300
Next 1,000	35%	350
Total $13,000		$2,050

Communal Living

Biblical Christians are experimenting with a variety of simpler lifestyles today. An Age of Hunger demands drastic change. But we must be extremely careful to avoid legalism and self-righteousness. No one model is God's will for everyone. You are not necessarily more righteous if you live on $2,000 less per year than a Christian friend. "We have to be ware of the reverse snobbery of spirutal one-up-manship....We don't want to overgeneralize from our experience; God seems to love variety."

Practical Suggestions

The following are hints, not rules. Freedom, joy, and laughter are essential elements of simple living.

1. Reduce your food budget by:

* gardening: try hoeing instead of mowing;
* substituting vegetable protein for animal protein. Cookbooks like *Recipes for a Small Planet* and *More-With-Less Cookbook* tell you how to prepare delicious, meatless meals. One-third of your daily protein needs cost thirteen cents via peanut butter, seventy-three cents via veal cutlets.
* joining a food co-op (if there's none in your area, write to The Cooperative League of the U.S.A. for materials on how to start one);
* fasting regularly;
* opposing (by speech and example) the flagrant misuse of grain for making beer and other alcoholic beverages (the U.S. annually uses enough grain--5.2. million tons--in the production of alcoholic beverages to feed 26 million people in a country like India); and
* setting a monthly budget and sticking to it.

2. Question your own lifestyle, not your neighbors'.

3. Lower energy consumption by:

* keeping your thermostat (at home and office) at 68 F. or lower during winter months;
* supporting public transportation with your feet and your vote;
* using bicycles, car-pools and, for trips under one mile, your feet;
* making dishwashing a family time instead of buying a dishwasher; and
* buying a fan instead of an air-conditioner.

4. Resist consumerism by:

*laughing regularly at TV commercials;
* developing family slogans like "Who are you kidding?" and "You can't take it with you";
* making a list of dishonest ads and boycotting those products; and
* using the postage-paid envelopes of direct-mail advertisers to object to their unscrupulous advertising.

5. Buy and renovate an old house in the inner city (and persuade a few friends to do the same so you can form a Christian community).

6. Reduce our society's consumption of nonrenewable natural resources by:

* resisting obsolescence (purchasing quality products when you must buy);
* sharing appliances, tools, lawnmowers, sports equipment, books, even a car (this is easier if you live close to other Christians committed to simple living); and
* organizing a "things closet" in your church for items used only occasionally--edger, clippers, cots for unexpected guests, lawnmowers, camping equipment, ladder.

7. Have one or two "homemade" babies and then adopt.

8. See how much of what you spend is for status and eliminate it.

9. Refuse to keep up with clothing fashions. (Virtually no reader of this article needs to buy any clothes--except maybe shoes--for two or three years.)

10. Enjoy what is free.

11. Live on a welfare budget for a month. (Ron Jones's *Finding Community* will tell you how to calculate it).

12. Give your children more of your love and time rather than more things.

That's enough for a beginning! The following will help further. The Shakertown Pledge Group (West 44th & York South, Minneapolis, Minn. 55410) publishes a "Bibliography on Simple Living" and Alternatives (Box 20626, Greensboro, N.C. 27420) publishes an "Alternative Celebrations Catalog," which provides exciting, inexpensive, ecologically sound alternative ideas for celebrating Christmas, Valentine's Day, Thanksgiving, and other holidays. Ernest Callenbach's *Living Poor With Style* (Bantam) and Art Gish's *Beyond the Rat Race* (Herald Press) *also have valuable suggestions.*

Copyright 1977 by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, reprinted by permission of Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515.

EDITORIAL *(Continued from page 1)*

your major concerns of the day. We do this briefly at breakfasttime. Our prayers include the needs of family and friends.

In bed, spend a few moments before going to sleep, reviewing your day. Once again thank God for what He has given you and yours, and ask forgiveness, if need be, for your mistakes. You are forgiven already, of course, but it's good to know you are.

Finally, ask for God's peace and protection for your household. The Psalmist tells us: "When I lie down, I go to sleep in peace; you alone, O Lord, keep me perfectly safe."

Undoubtedly you will develop your own approach (you can learn finally from God and no one else which is the good and right and God-given way for you) to practice His presence in your life.

WE WELCOME CONTRIBUTIONS (they are tax-deductible) of any amount. Our purpose is to have as many people as possible participate in Fellowship in Prayer. You, as donor, will receive a card certifying you as a Partner in Prayer in the Fellowship. In addition you will be sent the equivalent of a subscription to this bi-monthly publication.

Fellowship in Prayer
Room 230
20 Nassau Street
Princeton, N.J. 08540

Date . . . . . .

I enclose $ . . . . as a donation to FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER toward furthering the work. (All contributions are tax-deductible.) As a Partner in Prayer, I will receive a copy of its bimonthly publication.

NAME . . . . . .

ADDRESS . . . . . .

CITY . . . . . STATE . . . . . ZIP . . . . . .

If your donation includes others to receive the publication as Partners in Prayer, please list their names and addresses.

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, INC.
Room 230, 20 Nassau Street
Princeton, N.J. 08540

Peter V.K. Funk, Executive Director and Treasurer
Paul Griffith, Editor
Joy Bergman, Assistant Secretary

Board of Trustees
William H. Hung, President Emeritus
Peter V.K. Funk, President Emeritus
Reuben L. Musey, President
Narcissa Chamberlain, Vice President
Paul Griffith, Vice President
Francis Merchant, Vice President
Edwiene Schmitt, Vice President
Samuel M. Silver
Kathryn G. Brown, Secretary of the Corporation

Advisers & Contributing Editors
Ray Allen Albert (Virginia)
Velta Myrle Allen (California)
Elizabeth Barjou (New York)
Dorothy Barko (New York)
Dennis Barry Carroll (Maryland)
Emilie , Lady Coote (England)
Emily Sargent Councilman (N.C.)
Zelma S. Dennis (California)
Georga Palmer Dishner (Tennessee)
Eleanor Ebersole (Pennsylvania)
Marion H. Freeman (Massachusetts)
Mary P. Funk (New Jersey)
Nixeon Civille Handy (Washington)
Catherine C. Houck (Pennsylvania)
Georgiana Lieder Lahr (Florida)
Hsuan-min Liu (China)
Mildred Long (California)
Georgia S. Marin (New Hampshire)
Emma S. McLaughlin (Pennsylvania)
Mrs Reuben L. Musey (Maryland)
Mrs Charles Oakes (N.C.)
Carla Patsuris (New York)
Marion J. Richardson (New York)
Swami Ritajananda (France)
Mrs Mildred Seydell (Georgia)
Dr Teh-yao Wu (Singapore)

"For a world united in prayer"